
Description

'Eunoia', which means 'beautiful thinking', is the shortest word in the English language to contain all five vowels. This book also contains them all, but never at the same time. Each of Eunoia's five chapters is univocalic: that is, each chapter uses only one vowel. A triumphant feat, seven years in the making, this uncanny work of avant-garde literature is one of the most surprising and awe-inspiring books of the year.

Insightful reviews

Adam: How to describe *Eunoia*? Pretentious? Sure. Self-congratulatory? Most definitely.

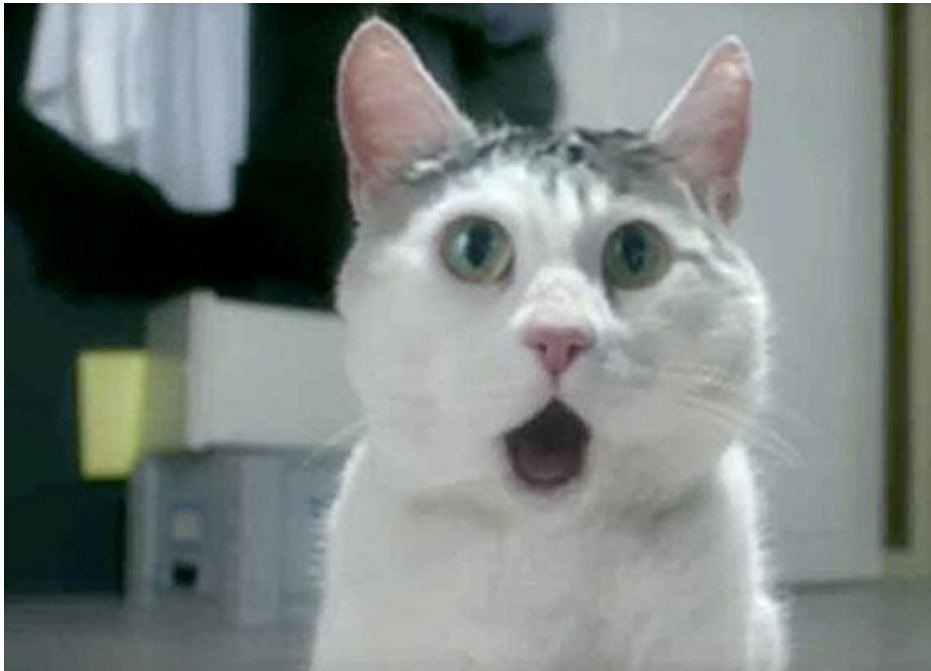
However, the accolades Christian Bök heaps upon himself don't matter much because of the startling nature of *Eunoia*. To read it is to marvel at the astounding adaptability of the English language (though Bök does include *many* foreign words, which feels a bit like cheating, but most writers include them anyway, so why not Bök as well?).

Eunoia is a univocal lipogram, meaning each chapter is restricted only to words containing a particular vowel. A, E, I, O, and U all have separate chapters. The text itself is intended as poetry, though it certainly does not always read as such due to its disjointed nature. While much of the words are included to convey emotions instead of story, there is also much story to go around. What is really astounding is that nearly all of it comes across with near perfect clarity. Despite the language being restricted, it provides something coherent each step of the way:

-- From Chapter E: "Enfettered, these sentences repress free speech. The text deletes selected letters."

-- From Chapter I: "I bitch; I kibitz--gripping whilst criticizing dimwits, sniping whilst indicting nitwits, dismissing simplistic thinking, in which philippic wit is still illicit."

-- From Chapter O: "Cold stormfronts from snowstorms blow snow onto fjords north of Oslo."

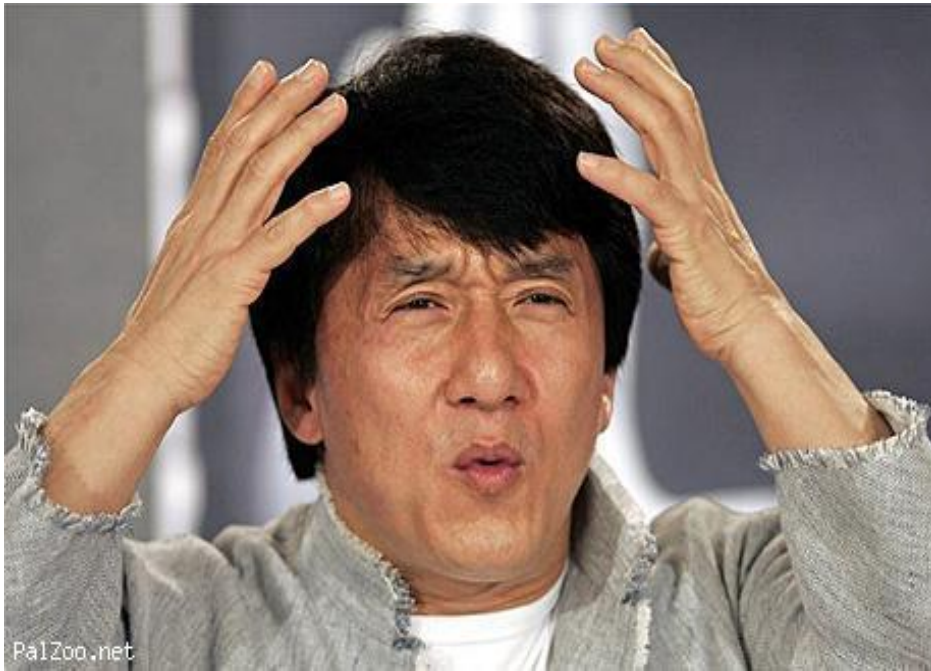


Right?

Bök claims to have rewritten *The Iliad* in these pages, ensuring that each chapter contains illicit sex, a banquet, and a seafaring adventure. *The Iliad* retelling seems a bit of a hyper-literary stretch, but encourages future re-readings. Honestly, I was more impressed by this literary allusion: "Crowds of droogs, who don workboots to stomp on downtrod hobos, go on to rob old folks, most of whom own posh co-op condos."

Some readers might be turned off the the amount of explicit sexual references, but think about the restriction of the English language. After excising a large part of the language from the lexicon of this book, Bök found a TON of words to describe crude sex acts, and a hell of a lot of them involving the vowel "U." Bök also claims that each chapter expresses the personality of the vowels. It's pretty difficult to see this throughout, but the "U" chapter takes the cake in this regard: "Ubu cups Lulu's dugs; Ubu rubs Lulu's buns; thus Lulu must pull Ubu's pud. Ubu sucks Ruth's cunt; Ubu cuffs Ruth's butt. Ubu stuffs Ruth's bum (such fun)." Sounds crude and ugly, right? Hey! Crude and ugly rely heavily on the "U" sound! Coincidence? Bök thinks not.

Really, the post-*Eunoia* material is where this book loses its hold on my amazement (with the excepted of "Emended Excess," which is more of the same). This includes separate homo-vocalic and homophonic translations of Rimbaud's "Voyelles." I won't lie, I had to look those terms up, and in light of their definitions, Bök's translations are impressive, but tiresome. At this point he seemed to be stretching his prowess a little too far...and then came "H" which is a visual sonnet constructed from the letter "H." Thus we enter into the non-sensical realm of "LOOK AT WHAT I CAN DO EVERYBODY!" There's also a "vowel-only" version of the Rimbaud poem: "AOIEAIOUEUEOEUEOEE."



Thus we reach the precipice of Bök's pretension. At least the journey was worth it. As annoying as the "Oiseau" section is, *Eunoia* is a work that I am certain to return for multiple readings. Just hearing Bök reading from Chapter I was enough to get me to purchase it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUNwH...>

If you're even slightly interested after that (how could you not be?) there's also a free version of the text available:

http://archives.chbooks.com/online_bo...

My recommendation is the Kindle version. Being that Bök restricted his language so much, there are a multitude of words I didn't know so I was grateful to be able to look them up with a click.

Candy Wood: When I first received this book in the mail from a crossword-loving friend, I thought it unreadable: blocks of text in the middles of about 100 pages, each "chapter" made up of words containing only one vowel. So Chapter A begins "Awkward grammar appals a craftsman. A Dada bard..." and continues with 11 more lines of the same length, each with no vowel but A. Picking it up again, I discovered that there are all kinds of patterns to notice, besides the incredible feat of composing any coherent sentence in words of one vowel each. After all, even the word "vowel" has more than one. A note at the end explains some of the "subsidiary rules" governing the chapters, such as that each one has references to writing, food and drink, and a sea voyage as well as internal rhyme and an avoidance of excessive repetition. Recommended for anyone fascinated by words.

Valerie: I moved this book up on my to read list because I wanted to try and read some Canadian literature this year. Bök is the only Canadian poet that I know, right now, and I am

going to do research to remedy this.

I was very impressed by Bök's poems. The book is split up into chapters, each chapter has poems where the only vowels are a certain letter. Each chapter was dedicated to a person with a name that has only one vowel, like Hans Arp, Yoko Ono. I kept thinking I caught him making a mistake, but they were all perfect. The poems made sense too, I thought the poems were going to be nonsense, or repetitive. Some of the chapters are longer than others, which is understandable. The poems all seemed to have the same format and were about 11-13 lines long.

The first part of the book was called Eunoia, and the second part is called Oiseau. Eunoia was the part with the vowel poems, Oiseau still has some letter exercise poems, but I like the format of Eunoia better. Oiseau isn't unified. I liked it, but it seems tacked on.

At the end of the book, Bök wrote what all the rules were for the poems. Here is an excerpt of some of the rules "All chapters must allude to the art of writing. All chapters must describe a culinary banquet, a prurient debauch, a pastoral tableau and a nautical voyage. All sentences must accent internal rhyme through the use of syntactical parallelism." Those are only some of the rules. This book must have taken forever to write. I feel like I am breaking my brain when I think about all the work that went into these poems.

Besides the fact that the poems were technically very good, they were also fun to read. Some of the chapters featured a main character that the poems revolved around (Hassad, Helen, I, Ubu).

Heather: The again hide provides a greater precis than I could: "'Eunoia,' this means that 'beautiful thinking,' is the shortest English note to comprise all 5 vowels. This ebook additionally comprises them all, other than that every one appears to be like on its own in its personal chapter." This is, as you may guess, either very good and a bit tedious, notwithstanding extra first-class than not. This booklet is visually particularly appealing: this edition's published on really nice cream paper, and the "chapters" are made of paragraph-length bits of textual content that look/read like prose poems. It makes for unique shapes, those blocks of justified textual content on dealing with pages, and the way your eye catches the truth that all of the phrases all comprise an identical vowel. the opposite factor i actually loved approximately this book, other than the most obvious experience of play, is that it includes plenty of list-ish passages, and many intriguing or pleasing or new-to-me words. through web page 30 I had an entire record of phrases i needed to appear up, which made me take into consideration how i am lovely convinced that the final ebook I learn didn't require me to seem up a unmarried be aware (though it did make me search for humans and ideas i wished to benefit extra about), which made me take into consideration how a lot i love taking a look up phrases (as I sat at my table sooner than the workday begun with a 1980-something version of the Chambers Dictionary I snagged from a co-worker's outdated dice after she left).

Brian: easily my favourite monograph of poetry, ever. the majority of it includes 5 chapters, and every one is written utilizing a unmarried vowel. Your jaw simply drops on the complexity of what he can say inside this super confining exercise. a few of it really is beautiful: "Kingbirds flit

in gliding flight, skimming limpid springs, dipping wingtips in rills which brim with dwelling things: krill, shrimp, brill - fish with gilt fins, which swim in flitting zigs." I imagine I get pleasure from this ebook such a lot even though while it truly is simply raunchy and hilarious: "Porno indicates parents plenty of sordor - zoom photographs of Bjorn Borg's backside or Snoop Dogg's crotch. Johns who don condoms for blowjobs move downtown to Soho to appear for pornshops recognized to inventory plenty of lowbrow schlock -off-color porn for previous boors who lengthy to drool onto colour pictures of cocks, boobs, dorks or donges. Homos shoot images of footlong schlongs...." and on and on. natural genius. A examining of the complete booklet through Bok himself should be downloaded at <http://www.ubu.com/sound/bok.html> The complete textual content of the booklet is on-line at <http://www.chbooks.com/archives/onlin...>

Naomi: Christian Bök's *Eunoia* was once an enlightening learn at the varied variations and makes use of of vowels inside of phrases and sentences. As an exploration of language, I assumed the booklet used to be rather well done: each one bankruptcy was once devoted to a vowel, giving the vowel a definite personality and subject matter on most sensible of its sound. For example, U is definitely validated because the crude vowel, with many sexually particular words and concepts written through the chapter. even though those sections have been interesting, I could not shake the sensation that they gave the impression of a grammatical/linguistic workout and accordingly came upon them a piece tedious to learn after a while. For this reason, I most well-liked the second one part of the book, entitled "Oiseau," since it explored vowels and their sounds in a extra textured manner that felt extra like poetry. I fairly loved "Vowels," the place Bök writes a whole poem with diversifications of phrases comprised of "I, v, w, s, o and e." The simplicity of how the letters may perhaps morph in shape and assembly used to be very beautiful.

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